I am writing concerning the Amateur Radio Relay League's recent petition concerning an amendment to Parts 2 and 97 of the Commission's rules regarding an allocation near 5 mHz for the Amateur Radio Service.

While I agree that such an allocation can help further the cause of Amateur Radio service to help in disaster areas, I cannot fully agree with the ARRL's petition.

The ARRL is requesting, specifically, consideration to open a segment from 5250 - 5400 kHz to amateur use with a limit of 1500 watts (the "60 meter band"). They have put together an impressive package filled with technical information which I will assume is detailed and correct, because, quite frankly, I can't make heads or tails of almost all of it. However, it seems to all boil down to an argument that a person can communicate several hundred miles or so at a time when conditions are favorable for neither the 80 meter nor the 40 meter band. Allocation of this segment would support emergency communications in time of disaster.

Unfortunately, while the ARRL may be well intentioned, the arguments they put forth as supporting the idea of allowing amateurs to put out 1500 watts on this "new" band seem not to support their position, but rather to work against them. While the idea appears to look good on paper, I feel that it would not work in reality.

If one monitors the 80- and 40-meter bands on any given night, it is obvious that there are a number of frequencies that are staked out and used for hours on end by operators with legal limit amplifiers and directional antennas (and not all of the conversations are ones you would want your 11-year-old daughter to hear). Even the unofficial "DX" parts of the band are taken by the same operators night after night for conversations lasting hours in length. It is impossible for stations with lesser capabilities to even attempt to use these frequencies.

If this new allocation is being used for primarily domestic use, why is 1500 watts necessary? One sees in advertisements on ham radio bulletin boards and on auction websites a parade of "work the world with 25 watts and a dipole!" (usually attributed to 10 meter radios). If this is to be believed, why should more than 250 watts, for example, be necessary if for one to make a call from one part of the US to another? If 1500 watts were allowed, the new band would only become yet another playground for "those that have", and those of us that "don't have" would lose again.

In addition, the use of this segment of the band would be on a secondary basis for Amateur operations; exactly how much would 1500 watts interfere, both domestically and worldwide, on the primary users of these frequencies? Some of these frequencies, I understand, are used almost exclusively for emergency purposes. If I were the primary user of one of these frequencies, I would look very severely at any allocation with wattage levels that high.

I may be only a Technician Class licensee, but I am working on my General Class license. With the cost of living, I cannot afford to buy, in addition to a $900 HF radio, a $2,500 amplifier and assorted filters, coax, a beam antenna, and a tower. I work at Wal-Mart; all of that stuff is way beyond my means, unless someone happens to toss a winning lottery ticket my way. If all one can afford is a 100-watt radio and a wire antenna, how can one expect to compete against such stations in increasingly crowded situations, especially if an emergency were in progress? Being a veteran of over a dozen hurricanes, I can attest to

the fact that towers don't do too well in 100+ mile per hour winds; a wire dipole strung between two trees would often be the only available antenna.

While I agree that the idea of a 60 meter band would be a good thing, perhaps a closer look at authorized power levels would be prudent. It's easy enough to increase the authorization later, if need be -- it's kind of hard to tell people after the fact that they have to lower their power; they won't take it too well.

I urge you to consider this carefully; it would be nice for once if the playing field were a bit more level for those of us that can't afford to bring uniforms to the game.